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REV. WILLIAM KNIBB, MISSIONARY TO THE ISLAND OF JAMAICA.

COMPILED FROM AN ADDRESS BY REV. S. WILLIAMS.

WILLIAM KNIBB was born in Kettering, England, and was a member of the Sabbath-school connected with Mr. Toller's Church, of that place, where he received the elements of a Christian education, and, perhaps, of the character that rendered him so eminently qualified for the arduous and difficult achievements he was destined, in the providence of God, to accomplish.

When called to the work of the ministry, he was sent to the Bradford Academy, where he pursued a course of literary and theological studies under the direction of the late excellent Dr. Steadman.

In November, 1824, he sailed, with his wife, for Jamaica. When he reached the shore, the slaves hailed his appearance with shouts of joyous welcome, because of his resemblance to his brother—who had previously labored and died among them—and because they should again hear the Gospel from a missionary's lips.

In September, 1829, his declining health rendered it necessary that he should remove from Kingston to a more northerly part of the island. Accordingly, he took charge of the smaller Churches of the north-west, called Ridgeland and Savannah la Mar. On the death of Mr. Mann, of Falmouth, he took the pastoral care of the Church in that place, which then numbered eight hundred and eighty-five members.

About the close of that year, Mr. Knibb received the first intimation of the insubordination of some of the slaves. He exerted his influence to the utmost to quell the turbulence of the leaders of the rebellion. But his efforts availed neither to suppress the rising spirit of liberty, nor to satisfy the tyranny or appease the malice of the slaveholders. They at once blamed the missionaries for the insubordination of the slaves, and, in defiance of law, and the sacredness of his office, they seized Mr. Knibb, tore him from his family, and compelled him to serve in the militia against the slaves. He found that the wrath of the tyrants was unbounded, and he daily expected to die by the hands either of the executioner or of the infuriated mob. He was, however, delivered from his perilous situation through the intervention of Mr. Roby, collector of customs, who, though no friend to the missionaries, was indignant at such manifest injustice, and offered himself as security for Mr. Knibb's good behavior. This gentleman was afterward employed by the authorities to prevail upon the missionaries to leave the island. This they would not consent to do, averring their innocence of the crimes with which they were charged. At length, their enemies became so furious that they were obliged to take refuge on board a ship lying in the bay. But they were soon driven therefrom, on the pretext that there were no accommodations for them.

As a consequence of Mr. Knibb's former arrest, a trial ensued; for he demanded the proof of the charges brought against him; but his accusers withdrew from the presence of the court, ashamed and confounded, while his judges were constrained to admit that there was no evidence to support a criminal prosecution.

In March, 1832, however, under some pretext, a prosecution was instituted against him; and although his prosecutors made every effort to conceal the ground of procedure until the day of trial, yet there were three hundred wit-

nesses in attendance to prove his innocence. The Attorney-General, seeing such an array of witnesses, preferred to enter a *nolle prosequi*, rather than brook the scorn even of those who had the smallest sense of justice.

When the tyrants saw that they could not have revenge upon the *persons* of the missionaries, they commenced the destruction of their *property*. On the 7th of February, Mr. Knibb's Chapel had been razed to the ground; then the missionaries' houses were assailed, and they themselves threatened with personal violence in the most ruthless manner, without regard to their acknowledged innocence and the helplessness of their wives and children.

As the missionaries could not avert the storm, nor even assuage its fury, nor pursue their appropriate labors of preaching the Gospel and teaching the youth, they urged Mr. Knibb to proceed to England and spread the matter before the Churches and the nation. He sailed, with his family, on the 26th of April, 1832, and reached home just in time to attend the missionary meeting at Spafields Chapel, on the 21st of June. Most memorable day! The Society had enjoined on its missionaries a strict neutrality in every thing connected with the politics of the country; which injunction they had as strictly obeyed. Mr. Knibb, however, now boldly declared, that neither missions nor missionaries could any longer exist on the island without the entire abolition of slavery.

The prudent secretary had, before he went on the platform, given him admonition to be moderate; but Mr. Knibb assured the audience, already excited to a pitch of the utmost indignation, by his tale of slaughtered families, imprisoned missionaries, and ruined chapels, that the negroes would never be allowed to worship God in peace until slavery should be entirely abolished.

While he was thus kindling a fire of irrepressible indignation in the hearts of his hearers, the secretary, afraid that

the Society would be committed to the cause of abolition, attempted to check him. He paused for a moment, but in the glance he gave the assembled thousands, they read his burning thoughts. "The Society is dear to me, with all its interests and results; but shall the Church of God be deterred from bearing its testimony against the most atrocious crime under heaven, on account of the rotten politics of any country where mischief is framed by a law?" He thought of the atrocities past, of his own position, that God had placed him on that platform, to plead for the liberty and salvation of eight hundred thousand human beings, and of his weighty responsibilities to God and his cause; and concentrating all his energies, he exclaimed, in clarion tones, "Whatever may be the consequences, I WILL SPEAK! At the risk of all I hold dear, I will avow this—that if the Society will not hear me, I will turn and tell it to my God, that I will never desist until this greatest of crimes is removed, and 'Glory to God in the highest' is inscribed upon the flag of the nation."

His resolution was decisive. It sounded the knell of slavery in the West Indies. He carried the immense meeting then present, and went from city to city, and from village to village, until petitions, by cart-loads, were rolled into Parliament, and the whole nation, with the exception of a few planters and aristocratic landlords, were enthusiastically in favor of emancipation. There was one almost universal burst of a nation's indignation against the wrongs that had been perpetrated, and the system of which those wrongs were a natural outgrowth. And nothing now would satisfy the moral sensibilities of the Christians of England but the annihilation of the accursed system. Such was the overwhelming tide of public sentiment in favor of emancipation, that the interested slaveholders and their pro-slavery allies were awed into silence.

In May of the following year, Lord Stanley introduced his

celebrated Bill for the Abolition of Slavery throughout the British colonies; including the apprenticeship system, with all the machinery necessary to its working, and the collecting, apportioning, and disbursing twenty millions of pounds, as compensation to the slaveholders. All parties soon came to the conclusion that the apprenticeship system was cumbersome, complicated, and little better than slavery itself; which facts induced the government at length to abolish it. In doing so, they performed an act of simple justice. In the mean time a benevolent public contributed freely of their funds to rebuild the chapels and houses that had been destroyed by the slaveholders and their minions.

In the autumn of 1834, Mr. Knibb returned to Jamaica. On the 14th of February, 1835, the corner-stone of his new chapel in Falmouth was laid, to the great joy of thousands of the people. It was opened for worship in April, 1836. So large was the attendance that six preachers were speaking at the same time. Mr. Knibb, also, had a large Lancasterian school-building erected for the children of all denominations.

On the first of August, 1838, the miserable apprenticeship system was abolished: and such a day has seldom been witnessed, in any age, as that on which eight hundred thousand people were declared free. The night previous, Mr. Knibb gathered his exultant people about him, and as the clock began to strike the midnight hour, he exclaimed, "THE MONSTER IS DEAD! THE NEGRO IS FREE! THREE CHEERS FOR THE QUEEN!" And the air was rent with the shouts of the emancipated multitudes. As soon as the morning dawned, the triumphant throng gathered whips and chains and other emblems of their enslavement, put them into a coffin, and ceremoniously buried them, amid suitable rejoicings. Thus did this noble man live to see realized those wishes which he had expressed in his eloquent and stirring speeches before the Churches of England,

and at the missionary meetings at Spafields Chapel, on the 21st of June, 1832.

The next thing that occupied his attention was to secure homes and independent lands for the laborers, so that their white tyrants should no longer take the advantage of poor colored men. He established a normal school at the village of Kettering, for the education of teachers, both for the West Indies and Africa; and also a theological school, for preparing pious young men for the ministry at home, or to labor as missionaries abroad.

If an attempt were made to narrate all his toils and sufferings, in detail, no words could do justice to such an eventful life. Though extending over a comparatively brief period, and cut off in its full vigor, it was crowded with events which have conferred inestimable blessings upon myriads whom he found slaves, but whom he left free. The annals of Jamaica contain no name so illustrious, or destined to be so fragrant in the grateful recollections of its emancipated population. But he must not be estimated merely by his exertions in the cause of liberty; we must add to these his transcendent qualifications as a minister of the Gospel. Both may be measured by their efficiency and success. In efficiency, it may be safely affirmed, that Clarkson, Wilberforce, and Knibb, constitute a triumvirate to which future ages will look with gratitude and admiration. In success, his name must stand in the very highest class—with Brainard, Martyn, Carey, and Williams. The greatest glory of William Knibb was, that he united both those kinds of excellence, and achieved for himself a reputation peculiarly his own. That, in the course of such a career, he should have offended many selfish interests and stirred up many enemies, might have been predicted; but that very opposition only served to strengthen his hands, and to enthrone him more firmly in the hearts of his adopted people. They will never forget at what expense he fought the battles of the

slave, reproached, reviled, loaded with ignominy and with bonds ; or how, for the love he bore them, he almost became a willing sacrifice on martyrdom's altar. His persecutors have already sunk into merited oblivion, but the names of Knibb and his brethren will be cherished by the colored people of Jamaica, and handed down to their children, as the founders of their liberties and the apostles of their Christianity.

Results of West India Emancipation.

COUNSELOR COCHIN, in his work on Emancipation, sums up these results as follows :

“A social revolution has been attempted at once, in nineteen countries, dispersed between the Caribbean Sea, the southern extremity of Africa, and the entrance to the Indian Ocean, having neither the same climate, nor the same institutions, nor the same social state, and placed many thousand leagues from the handful of legislators who wrote their fate in a daring law. In the most extended of these countries, Jamaica, 300,000 slaves were face to face with 35,000 whites. Since the commencement of this century, five formidable insurrections had spread incendiarism and slaughter, the last of which, only two years before emancipation, had been followed by the execution of more than five hundred negroes. Another, Guiana, occupied by only 16,000 whites, offered 6,400 square miles as a refuge to more than 80,000 negroes. ‘This event, so formidable at first sight,’ wrote M. de Broglie, and we can repeat it seventeen years after him, ‘the summons to freedom of 800,000 slaves on the same day, at the same moment, has not caused in all the English colonies the tenth part of the disturbance ordinarily caused among the most civilized nations of Europe by the smallest political question that agitates minds ever so little.’

“The harm produced by emancipation is reduced to the incontestable ruin of a certain number of colonists, and the momentary and inevitable suffering of all. It is worthy of note that the colony which resisted most, Jamaica, suffered most. The colony which most promptly resigned itself and made efforts to renew the methods, stock, and *personnel* of manufacture—Mauritius—scarcely suffered at all, and its wealth is to-day doubled, nearly tripled. The aggregate production of the other colonies has again reached the amount prior to 1834. There is no doubt that it would have surpassed it if the commercial reform had not complicated the results of the abolition of slavery.

“Nearly a million of men, women and children have passed from the condition of cattle to the rank of rational beings. Numerous marriages have elevated the family above the mire of a nameless promiscuousness. Paternity has replaced illegitimacy. The churches and schools are opened. Religion, before mute, factious, or dishonored, has resumed its dignity and liberty. Men who had nothing have acquired property; lands which were waste have been occupied; inadequate populations have increased; detestable processes of culture and manufacture have been replaced by better; a race reputed inferior, vicious, cruel, lascivious, idle, refractory to civilization, religion and instruction, has shown itself honest, gentle, disposed to family life, accessible to Christianity, eager for instruction. Those of its members who have returned to vagrancy, sloth, and corruption are not a reproach to their race as much as to the servitude which had left them wallowing in their native ignorance and depravity; but these are the minority. The majority labor, and show themselves far superior to the auxiliaries which China and India send to the colonists. In two words, wealth has suffered little, civilization has gained much: such is the balance-sheet of the English experiment.”